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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Msgr. Clement J. Connolly, Holy Family Church, South Pasadena, CA.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Msgr. Clement J. Connolly, offered the following prayer:

Ever present living God, here words are spoken, decisions are made that shape the lives and times of generations. We are entrusted with the sacred stewardship of legislating decisions for life and death. Not merely the quality of life is ours to measure, but even the length of life, and for a multitude. Once within our time and hearing a prophetic voice proclaimed Your gospel values in "a dream": peace, dignity, equality, community. Was it just a dream or the groaning of a great prayer asking for an Amen?

When we yearn for peace,
When power becomes powerless,
When riches and poverty meet,
When the one language of love unites us,

When the courage of our belief is unfettered from special interests,

When we see ourselves in the face of the other, the lion and the lamb lay down.

Your word is revealed. You, Creator God, are present.

Divine Wisdom, abide here so that every word spoken and every vote cast may be a prayer. The cause and the purpose may always give life, dignity, freedom, honor . . . above and beyond personal or factional preference.

Thus so we pray, One Nation Under God, in the Name of that infinite God, Mystery, Many Faces, Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Allah, Yahweh, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I announce the schedule for the day. This morning, there will be a period of morning business for up to 2 hours. The first 60 minutes will be under the control of Senator ALEXANDER and Senator MURKOWSKI, and the final 60 minutes will be under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

Upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate will resume the consideration of the nomination of Miguel Estrada to be a circuit judge for the DC Circuit Court. Also, today the Senate will recess from the hours of 12:30 to 2:15 for the weekly party caucuses.

As a reminder, Senators who desire to speak on the nomination are asked to do so during today's session.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. While the acting majority leader is in the Chamber, I say through him to the majority leader that I certainly am appreciative of—and I think I speak for the entire Senate—his setting aside time for Senators to give their maiden speeches. Some may think this is a waste of time. From personal experience, when I gave my first speech on the Senate floor, presiding was David Pryor, and listening in his office was CHUCK GRASSLEY. My speech was on the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights, which I worked on my entire time in the House of Representatives. The subcommittee chairman did not like the legislation and would not do anything on it. To make a long story short, Sen-

ator Pryor sent me a note and said he liked my speech and liked the legislation I was talking about. Senator GRASSLEY also contacted me that day. They were both senior members of the Finance Committee, and as a result of their support I was able to get that legislation passed, which was landmark legislation, putting the taxpayer on a more equal footing with the tax collector.

I say to Senator ALEXANDER and others who will give their maiden speeches: People listen. These speeches really are meaningful.

I look forward to Senator ALEXANDER's speech. In fact, I will be joining with him in the legislation he is going to introduce.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 2 hours. Under the previous order, the first 30 minutes is under the control of the Senator from Tennessee, Mr. ALEXANDER.

The majority leader is recognized.

MAIDEN SPEECHES

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, first of all, I thank the new Senators who are here. I heard my distinguished colleague from Nevada talk a little bit about what we are about to embark upon. It is a rich tradition of this body. In the last few years, we have gotten away from having what we call a "maiden speech." It is not the first time we have heard from our freshmen

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Senators on both sides of the aisle, but it does give Members an opportunity to focus, as we just heard, on issues that are important to individual Senators but also are important to the American people in the broadest sense.

In this body, because we are always on a particular piece of legislation or in Executive Session, this gives us an opportunity to pause for a moment and shine that spotlight and that focus on an initial speech or discussion.

I am delighted we are reaching to the past—not the distant past—to something we have gotten away from in the last several Congresses, and as an initiative by our new Senators are embarking upon what I know will be a great and very meaningful and powerful experience for all of us.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair, in my capacity as the Senator from Alaska, asks the floor staff to notify me when such speeches are to be made of any Senator.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, while the majority leader is in the Chamber, I ask unanimous consent that the majority be given a full hour—we have taken some time today—and the Democrats, if necessary, extended 10 minutes also. I ask unanimous consent.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I first thank the majority leader for his comments and his friendship and his encouragement of the new Senators in these first addresses. I thank the Senator from Nevada for his encouragement and his willingness to join me in cosponsoring the legislation that I hope to talk about. I thank my colleagues for taking the time to be here today.

From the Senate's earliest days, new Members have observed, as we just heard, the ritual of remaining silent for a period of time, ranging from several weeks to 2 years. By waiting a respectful amount of time before giving their so-called "maiden speeches," freshmen Senators hoped their senior colleagues would respect them for their humility.

This information comes from our Senate historian, Richard Baker, who told me that in 1906 the former Governor of Wisconsin—I am sensitive to this as a former Governor—Robert La Follette, arrived here, in Mr. Baker's words, "anything but humble." He waited just 3 months, a brief period by the standards of those days, before launching his first major address. He then spoke for 8 hours over 3 days and his remarks in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD consumed 148 pages. As he began to speak, most of the Senators present in the Chamber rose from their desks and departed. La Follette's wife, observing from the gallery, wrote:

There was no mistaking that this was a polite form of hazing.

From our first day here, as the majority leader said, we new Members of

the 108th Congress have been encouraged to speak up, and most of us have. But, with the encouragement of the majority leader and the assistant minority leader, several of us intend also to try to revive the tradition of the maiden address by a signature speech on an issue that is important both to the country and to each of us. I thank my colleagues who are here, and I assure all of you that I will not do what the former Governor of Wisconsin did and speak for 3 days.

THE AMERICAN HISTORY AND CIVICS EDUCATION ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I rise today to address the intersection of two urgent concerns that will determine our country's future, and these are also the two topics I care about the most, the education of our children and the principles that unite us as Americans. It is time we put the teaching of American history and civics back in its rightful place in our schools so our children can grow up learning what it means to be an American. Especially during such serious times when our values and ways of life are being attacked, we need to understand just what those values are.

In this, most Americans would agree. For example, in Thanksgiving remarks in 2001, President Bush praised our Nation's response to September 11. "I call it," he said, "the American character." At about the same time, speaking at Harvard, former Vice President Al Gore said, "We should fight for the values that bind us together as a country."

Both men were invoking a creed of ideas and values in which most Americans believe. "It has been our fate as a nation," the historian Richard Hofstadter wrote, "not to have ideologies but to be one." This value-based identity has inspired both patriotism and division at home as well as emulation and hatred abroad. For terrorists, as well as those who admire America, at issue is the United States itself—not what we do but who we are.

Yet our children do not know what makes America exceptional. National exams show that three-quarters of the Nation's 4th, 8th, and 12th graders are not proficient in civics knowledge and one-third do not even have basic knowledge, making them "civic illiterates."

Children are not learning about American history and civics because they are not being taught them. American history has been watered down, and civics is too often dropped from the curriculum entirely.

Until the 1960s, civics education, which teaches the duties of citizenship, was a regular part of the high school curriculum. But today's college graduates probably have less civic knowledge than high school graduates of 50 years ago. Reforms, so-called, in the 1960s and 1970s, resulted in widespread elimination of required classes and cur-

riculum in civics education. Today, more than half the States have no requirement for students to take a course—even for one semester—in American government.

To help put the teaching of American history and civics in its rightful place, today I introduce legislation on behalf of myself and cosponsors, Senator REID of Nevada, Senator GREGG, Senator SANTORUM, Senator INHOFE, and Senator NICKLES. We call it the American History and Civics Education Act. The purpose of the act is to create presidential academies for teachers of American history and civics, and congressional academies for students of American history and civics. These residential academies would operate for 2 weeks, in the case of teachers, and 4 weeks in the case of students, during the summertime. Their purpose would be to inspire better teaching and more learning of the key events, the key persons, and the key ideas that shape the institutions and democratic heritage of the United States.

I had some experience with such residential summer academies when I was Governor of Tennessee. It was a good experience. In 1984, we began creating governor's schools for students and for teachers. We had a Governor's School for the Arts. We had a Governor's School for International Studies at the University of Memphis, a Governor's School for Teachers of Writing at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, which was very successful. Eventually there were eight governor's schools in our State, and they helped thousands of Tennessee teachers improve their skills and inspired outstanding students in the same way. When those teachers and students went back to their own schools during the regular school year, their enthusiasm for teaching and learning the subject they had been a part of in the summer infected their peers and improved education across the board. Dollar for dollar, I believe the governor's schools in our State were the most effective popular education initiatives in our State's history.

We weren't the only State to try it; many did. The first State governor's school I heard about was in North Carolina, started by Terry Sanford when he was Governor in 1963, and then other States have done the same—Georgia, South Carolina, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In 1973, Pennsylvania established the Governor's Schools of Excellence, with 14 different programs of study. Mississippi has done the same. Virginia's Governor's School is a summer residential program for 7,500 of the Commonwealth's most gifted students. Mississippi and West Virginia also have similar programs. They are just a few of the more than 100 governor's schools in 28 States. Clearly, the model has proved to be a good one.

The legislation I propose today applies that successful model to American history and civics by establishing